

Message Text

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16

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02

SS-15 L-02 EUR-12 /062 W

----- 126254

R 120956Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4056

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4339

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, EAIR, EAID, PFOR, ET, UT

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES, THE DIRG AND TWA (CONTINUED)

REF: (A) ADDIS 3028; (B) ADDIS 3171

1. REFTELS BEING REPEATED ASMARA APRIL 14.
2. SENIOR AMERICAN (TWA) ADVISOR TO EAL GENERAL MANAGER, WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO MISSION AND WHO MUST BE STRICTLY PROTECTED, HAS INFORMED EMBASSY APRIL 12 AT OWN INITIATIVE OF FOLLOWING:
3. ACCORDING SOURCE, TWA'S MANAGEMENT RESPONDED TO EAL'S CONTRACT RENEWAL PROPOSAL IN LETTER DATED APRIL WHICH RECEIVED HERE BY EAL GENERAL MANAGER ON APRIL 8, TWA'S RESPONSE STATES IN ESSENCE THAT TWA UNABLE ACCEPT EAL'S PROPOSAL IN (ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL) CONTEXT IN WHICH THAT PROPOSAL MUST BE EVALUATED. TWA, IN LINE ITS LONG STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH EAL, CONTINUES TO BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE ADVISORY AND TECHNICAL FUNCTIONS UNDER DISCRETE SUBSIDIARY AGREEMENTS AS NECESSARY DURING A TRANSITION PERIOD FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF FORMAL CONTRACTUAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO AIRLINES.
4. ON APRIL 11, I.E. SHORTLY AFTER HIS RECEIPT OF THIS COMMUNICATION, EAL GENERAL MANAGER, COL. SEMRAT MEDHANIE, WAS SUMMONED TO

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MEET WITH DIRG CHAIRMAN BG TEFERI BANTE AND INFORMED THAT HE WOULD

BE TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER POSITION (UNSPECIFIED). AS SOURCE (WHO WAS NOT REPEAT NOT PRESENT AT MEETING) UNDERSTANDS FROM SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH SEMRAT AND OTHERS, REASON FOR DIRG'S DECISION APPEARS TO BE PRESSURE FROM ITS SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND, SPECIFICALLY, CAPTAIN ENDALE TESSEMA, WHO REPORTEDLY EVENTUALLY CONVINCED A RELUCTANT MAJORITY OF DIRG THAT COL. SEMRAT MUST BE REPLACED BECAUSE HE "CANNOT GET ALONG WITH HIS EMPLOYEES." IN TAKING THIS POSITION, THE DIRG'S SOCIAL COMMITTEE APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN AS REPRESENTATIVE THE ATTITUDE OF THE SMALL GROUP OF EAL PILOTS DESCRIBED IN PARA 2.B. OF REF A. SOURCE FEELS STRONGLY AND ASSERTS UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT THIS IS COMPLETELY MISREADING OF THE REALITY. ACCORDING SOURCE, EAL PERSONNEL GENERALLY DEEPLY RESENT THE INITIATIVE OF THIS SMALL GROUP OF ALREADY WELL-OFF PILOTS AND SUPPORTS SEMRAT WHO, MORE THAN ANY OTHER MAN ON THE EAL TEAM, HAS BY THE FORCE OF HIS CHARACTER, SKILL AND EXPERIENCE HELD THE COMPANY TOGETHER IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ETHIOPIAN ENVIRONMENT OF THE LAST 18 MONTHS.

5. SOURCE STATES THAT SEMRAT, HAVING HEARD THE DIRG'S DECISION, DID TWO THINGS: FIRST, HE TOLD THE CHAIRMAN THAT HE SEMRAT) IS QUITE PREPARED TO STEP ASIDE FOR THE GOOD OF THE AIRLINE; SECOND, HE MADE A VERY STRONG PLEA FOR DIRG SUPPORT TO EAL MANAGEMENT EFFORTS TO PRESERVE MANAGEMENT CONTROL AND THE REQUISITE DISCIPLINE WITHOUT WHICH THE AIRLINE COULD ONLY DETERIORATE. TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT, HE INFORMED THE CHAIRMAN THAT HIS CONCERN OVER THESE MATTERS WAS SHARED BY OTHERS AS TESTIFIED TO BY THE LETTER HE HAD JUST RECEIVED FROM TWA'S MANAGEMENT, THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH HE THEN GAVE HIM.

6. FOLLOWING SEMRAT'S MEETING WITH TEFERI BANTE, THE FORMER CONVENED THE EAL MANAGEMENT TEAM AND GRACEFULLY INFORMED IT OF THE DIRG'S DECISION AND OF TWA'S. HE THEN LEFT THE ROOM. THE MANAGEMENT TEAM, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, THEREUPON DELIBERATED ON THE BEST METHOD OF APPROACHING THE DIRG IN ORDER TO GAIN RECONSIDERATION OF ITS DECISION -- THE EAL MANAGEMENT TEAM BEING OF THE OPINION, WHICH SOURCE SHARES, THAT SEMRAT'S AIRLINE EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP ARE UNIQUE IN ETHIOPIA AND, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, IRREPLACEABLE. THE EAL MANAGEMENT TEAM EVENTUALLY REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE DIRG LIKELY WOULD BE MOST RESPONSIVE TO AN APPEAL FROM EAL WORKERS AND DECIDED THAT SUCH AN APPEAL SHOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ROUTED THROUGH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EAL BOARD, MINTELCON TEKALIGN GEDAMU.

7. AT THIS WRITING THAT IS WHERE MATTERS REST. EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO REACH THE UNION LEADERSHIP INSIDE AND OUTSIDE EAL AS WELL AS MINISTER TEKALIGN. IT IS THE CONSENSUS OF THOSE MOST DIRECTLY CONCERNED THAT EFFORT TO GENERATE SUCH AN APPEAL AND TO FORWARD IT TO THE DIRG MUST BE COMPLETED IN A MATTER OF HOURS IF

THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DIRG (EXPECTED DURING THE WEEKEND)
OF COL. SEMRAT'S TRANSFER IS TO BE BLOCKED. THERE IS AGREEMENT
THAT ONCE SUCH A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE, THE MATTER LIKELY
WILL HAVE GONE BEYOND THE POINT OF NO RETURN.
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